

AL-ISLAAH PUBLICATIONS

Part 4

Discourses of Hazrat Maseehullah Khan Saheb(R.A.): FOR FRIENDS Part 4

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1. FOREWORD

This fourth booklet in this series has now been published through the barkat and duas of Hadhratjee.

It is exactly two years since the first booklet was published, and booklets two and three followed shortly thereafter. Those readers who have attempted to follow the guidance in these booklets would have made considerable progress during this period. It is hoped that this fourth booklet will also assist readers in their progress, insha'allah ta'ala.

In reading the discourses of Hadhratjee, two points will have become quite obvious to the reader:

Firstly, that these discourses do not fall in the category of "casual reading", but require careful and concentrated reading. In other words, they require careful study.

Secondly, that there are certain technical terms that are used time and again. A knowledge and understanding of these terms lead to greater appreciation and enjoyment of the discourses.

There is a third point worth mentioning, a point which those who have been fortunate enough to actually sit in Hadhratjee's majalis will vouchsafe: The height of appreciation and enjoyment comes from listening with the correct frame of mind. Many have experienced such exultation as to verge on ecstasy when listening to Hadhratjee. This effect is not conveyed in these paraphrased translations, unfortunately. Nevertheless, the correct frame of mind is still essential to get the most out of these discourses.

A majlis held by a sheikh of tariqat has some special features. It is appropriate to repeat some important points concerning a majlis:

- A majlis does not follow the pattern of a lecture. A lecture on a subject will have a systematic explanation of all aspects of that subject. A majlis, on the other hand, is an informal talk. There may or may not be a theme around which the talk unfolds, but the topics discussed may change from minute to minute.

- The object of the talk is to provide answers to the problems faced by those attending the talk. (How the sheikh provides the right answers is a discussion on its own!)

- It obviously follows that those attending have come in search of answers leading to their self-rectification (islah). As the answers may appear at any moment, and may appear in an unexpected way, each and every sentence uttered by the sheikh has to be listened to with the greatest of concentration.

- The sheikh may punctuate his talk with a number of rhetoric questions, where the answers are quite obvious. This technique is used very skillfully by Hadhratjee.

- Another technique used by Hadhratjee is to speak in the first person when explaining an ayet. (In the translation these have been put in quotation marks, but it must not be thought that these are verbatim quotations from kitabs of tafsir.)

Bearing all this in mind, the suggestion is made that the reader should read each paragraph as an entity on its own, as well read it as part of the general theme. Whenever a question appears, the reader should stop to ponder what point Hadhratjee is putting forward. And, at all times, the reader

should be alert to the deficiency within himself that may need correction. Any points not quite clear should be clarified with an Alime Haqqani.

Attempts have been made to improve the presentation in these booklets. A heartfelt thanks to those who gave feedbacks and constructive suggestions. Gratitude is also expressed to those who assisted with the corrections and kitabit - Jazakumullah fi darein. Dr. I.M.

2.RUSHING HEADLONG

(This discourse was delivered by Hadhrat Maulana Muhammad Maseehullah Khan Saheb on Tuesday, the 25th of Ramadhân 1409, corresponding with the 2nd May 1989, in Jalalabad, India.)

The beginning of it is mercy, the middle of it is forgiveness, and the ending of it is freedom from the fire of Jahannam.(Hadith)

This month of Ramadhân is a month of extra mercy, of special forgiveness, of bounteous hosting, of great calmness, and of great blessings.

These special features of Ramadhan are derived by a subtle use of the word

"Ra-ma-dh-a-n" as an acronym in the following manner:

Ra - standing for rahmat (mercy)

Ma- standing for magfirat (forgiveness)

Dh - standing for dhiafat (hosting)

A - standing for ulfat (affection) / unsiat (calmness)

Nu- standing for ne'mat (blessings)

Allah Ta'ala's rahmat and magfirat are special in this month. Dhiafat: one is a guest of Allah Ta'ala Who provides for His servant. Ulfat and unsiat: affection between one another and with Allah Ta'ala. If there was no serenity who would stay hungry the whole day, and then still perform 20 rakats namaz of tarawih at night additionally? Ne'mat: blessings are to be seen everywhere. Just see what delicacies are placed before you at the time of breaking fast.

Besides the food, there are blessings visible elsewhere - in one's ibadat and obedience: one's tilawat, one's zikr, one's tasbihat are all performed in abundance.

One sees the Mu'min rising early for sehri, and then rushing to perform his Fajr namaz with jama't, eager to fulfill the rights of the shariat, the rights of Allah Ta'ala.

That Great Being, that infinite Non-particular Omniscient One has seen this small, finite, particular human eagerly rushing forth to fulfill His edicts - such zeal for obedience! - and He has taken him into His lap! The Infinite Being now sacrifices for this finite devotee.

The pre-requisite, of course, is that this finite human is a devotee of that calibre. If so, then there is no reason why the Master should not be ready to sacrifice for His servant.

3.QURBE ILAHI - CLOSENESS TO ALLAH

You have all heard of King Mahmud Ghaznavi and his slave Ayaz. The devotion of Ayaz to his master is legendary. In return for such dedication King Mahmud Ghaznavi was ready to sacrifice himself for his slave (if you only but knew!)

Ayaz's devotion was such that he sacrificed himself at every command of the king. This was the basis for the king's reciprocal attitude.

However, take note of the sequence: first comes dedication and sacrifice from the slave; then only will his turn come for the special mercy and sacrifice of the master.

Of course, the purpose of sacrifice on the part of the slave is to attain qurb, otherwise it is deception. As the Qur'an shareef states:

Do not let this dunya beguile you (S.31 A.33)

This world has its distractions: pomp, lustre, adornments and beauties. It should not be that the orders of Allah Ta'ala are directing you in one direction and you are sacrificing in the opposite direction.

Therefore, that human, that servant-slave of Allah Ta'ala should be ready to sacrifice to fulfill the orders of his Master. He should not give precedence to the orders of anybody else, and never, but never, act according to the orders of others in conflict with the orders of his Master. We are speaking of sacrifice of the servant-slave's inner being, his heart, his limbs and the rest of his body. Neither mentally, nor physicality, nor financially should he sacrifice at anybody else's command. Sacrifice should only be for the orders of his Master.

Note that it is Allah Ta'ala who has initially sought out His servant. Allah Ta'ala says, "I am near to you already..."

The relevant Qur'anic ayet is as follows:

We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (S.50 A. 16)

Allah Ta'ala is saying, "I am near to you already, but you also show that you are near to Me. My nearness is an established fact. It is you who have distanced yourself from Me!"

The servant-slave accepts this fact. "Then how can one get close?"

In the following manner: "Any command that originates from Me should penetrate your heart in such a way that your whole body, each and every part of it, should succumb to that command and act accordingly."

From the wide spectrum of commands one set of commands concern mu'asharat also. That, in this world social relationships, contact between one another, should be of ease and comfort, one of "ishrat", "ishrat" being the root of the word "mu'asharat". It is taken for granted that the Mu'min will have a pleasurable stay in Jannat in the Hereafter. "But, no!" Allah Ta'ala is saying, "Even in this world a pleasurable life, a life of ease and comfort, the life of a Jannati, is specially reserved for the Mu'min and not for anybody else!"

However if the Mu'min is running helter-skelter away from iman, then there is no question of his enjoying that special lifestyle (and whatever it entails) of ease and comfort.

Allah Ta'ala has stated in the Qur'an shareef that this world is also meant for you, O Mu'min. As for the Hereafter it is undoubtedly solely for you as well.

Say thou: Who hath forbidden the adornment which Allah hath produced for His servants and the good things of His providing? Say thou: Such, on the Day of Resurrection, will be only for those who believed during the life of the world. (S.7 A.32)

Whatever others are getting, whatever the gair-Mu'mins (non-Believers) are enjoying, is solely through the mediation of the Mu'min. The Mu'min is the original and real recipient of the bounties of Allah Ta'ala, and the gair-Mumin is getting his bit through your intercession. The day you, O Mu'min, cease to exist, your intercession will also cease. All the various ways and means that the ease and comfort were brought to you, will also cease. A full and complete life of ease and comfort was meant for you, O Mu'min, because you sacrificed yourself at each and every command of Allah Ta'ala. When you do not remain here anymore, the bounties will also disappear.

Allah Ta'ala has stated that He is near to you already, but you are not near to Him.

On hearing this, this human being is devastated. "What is it that I must do to get close?" he asks anxiously.

Allah Ta'ala says, "It is simply to obey My commands. When you obey My commands, your remoteness will be replaced by closeness (qurb). As stated, My qurb is there already. It is now in your ikhtiar - you have the choice."

Concerning the commands of Allah Ta'ala, a set of commands relate to mu'asharat - social relationships. It is in relation to mu'asharat that an ayet of the Qur'an shareef has come to mind:

4.HAFIZ - REAL AND RAMADHANI

I am not a hafiz. However, what should the reaction of a hafiz be when he hears these few phrases? A proper hafiz - not a "Ramadhani" hafiz, who is somebody else - a proper hafiz will immediately recite to himself what precedes and what follows these few phrases.

The reaction of an alim hafiz is different. (An alim hafiz is one who is an alim as well as a hafiz). Instead of merely reciting the preceding and following sections, the meaning of these phrases also immediately run through his mind. He identifies and translates the ayet immediately, and tells himself, "Aha! This is what is meant." This is a real hafiz.

So, what is a "Ramadhani" hafiz? Well, he is somebody who waits for Ramadhan to approach, and in the preceding months of Rajah and Shaban he hastily prepares himself to recite the Qur'an shareef in Ramadhan. He then sits back till the following Ramadhan. I am giving a lesson. There may be a hafiz or two who have come here and, very daringly, are sitting here. So, listen carefully:

A hafiz who has the time and opportunity should recite at least one manzil of the Qur'an shareef daily, i.e. one - seventh of the Qur'an shareef.

If he cannot manage one manzil, he should recite at least two paras daily.

This advice comes incidentally. Let us carry on with the ayet I had started reciting. Kindly complete it for me.

Shukria: That is the way to recite.

[This comment was directed at those who had recited the ayet for Hadhratjee.]

Let us stop there.

This morning, before the majlis commenced we saw how everybody rushed headlong to come and sit in the majliskhana. This happens daily. Once I commented, "What would people say at your mad rush to come in?" Some of you explained that the reason for the rush was that each person was trying to get a place right in front.

Well, the intention is commendable. It is called tanafus - that is, taking the lead in achieving something good to surpass others.

5.ASSABIQUNA - THOSE IN FRONT Allah Ta'ala says:

And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race: Those are they who will be brought nigh. (S.56 A.10/1)

Which reminds me of the following incident which is worth pondering over.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) instructed a small group of four Sahaba (RA), "Depart immediately for a certain place. As far as possible, try and reach there by this time." A time was specified.

These instructions are vital, so let me repeat them: Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) ordered four Sahaba (RA) to depart immediately for a certain place. As far as possible they had to reach there by the time specified by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

It was a Friday. The time for Jumu'ah namaz came and the namaz was performed by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). After the namaz, one of the four Sahaba presented himself before Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to make salam and musafah (shake hands) before departing on his mission.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) commented, "I had instructed four of you to depart. You are alone. What happened to the other three?"

The Sahabi (RA) replied, " The other three had saddled their horses and had left at that time."

"And you?"

The Sahabi (RA) said, "I thought to myself that today is Friday and there is great virtue in attending the Jumu'ah namaz. Because of a tremendous desire to acquire the virtues attached to this namaz, I did not depart immediately. A further temptation was the blessing of performing namaz behind you. The intense desire to attain these cumulative virtues made me stay behind and not depart then."

Let us analyse his attitude: The Sahabi (RA) is saying that those deeds which are greater in virtue and blessings, logically, will be means of greater qurbe ilahi i.e. the degree of qurb is proportional to the degree of virtuous deeds performed.

The virtues he was counting on were that of attending the Jumu'ah namaz and being led in the namaz by Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

The Sahabi (RA) continued his explanation:

"I have a horse that is faster than those of my companions. I will now depart and easily catch up with them along the way, and still reach our destination with them. In this way I will have attained the virtues of Jumu'ah here, as well as carrying out your instruction to reach our destination at the time specified."

Do you understand the points the Sahabi (RA) made? He wished to acquire the blessings of the Jumu'ah namaz, led by Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), as well as that of carrying out his earlier instruction.

Rasulallah Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Whatever you have said, has its merits, However, you have not obeyed my instructions to the letter. Therefore you have not acquired the qurb that the other three have acquired"

The lesson is "wassabiqunas sabiqun aula-ekal muqarrabun." Which is to say that the qurbe ilahi that the other three had attained by departing immediately, thus fulfilling the order of Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to the letter, this Sahabi (RA) had not attained.

You should understand this well, and safeguard yourself from merely fulfilling your desires. Merely giving expression to one's inner feelings is meaningless in relation to a specific instruction. These are points to turn over in one's mind, points to ponder over. On the surface what a beautiful intellectual argument, with proofs, was presented by the Sahaba' (RA): virtues of Jumu'ah, of performing namaz behind Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and, at the same time, the virtue of arriving at their destination according to Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) 's instruction. Despite this Rasulallah (sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said that he had not attained the qurb that his companions had attained by leaving immediately.

We can safely conclude: in the face of nas, there is no value to ijtiḥad. In other words, in the face of explicit instructions from Allah Ta'ala or His Rasul (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), one's own deductions and conclusions are meaningless. This Sahabi (RA) had used ijtiḥad (his own deductions and conclusions) in the face of nas, the specific instruction of Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), to depart immediately.

No matter how many virtues are attached to a particular action, and no matter how much qurb is attached to those virtues, these fade into insignificance in the face of obedience (ittibay'et). To repeat: ijtiḥad is meaningless in the face of nas.

It is apparent that ittibay'et is basic. It is fundamental. Nothing is attained by mere expression of affection.

A further conclusion one can draw from this is:

In the face of a command by ones senior, one should not be self-opinionated.

Of course, it goes without saying that the person who is one's senior or elder, is accepted as such and not merely recognised as such. There is a difference. A person acting on his own deductions and conclusions is merely gratifying his own desires. He is merely satisfying his own passions. He feels his progress lies in following his own viewpoint, that his line of action is good for him. In that case how can one say he has accepted his senior as such? His verbal acknowledgement of his senior is meaningless. Accepting someone as one's senior and elder is to be obedient to him, provided that he is not commanding one to commit sins by disobeying Allah Ta'ala's orders.

Therefore, in the face of a command by one's senior, if one puts forward one's own deductions, one will only land oneself in unnecessary problems. Then, can one expect one's senior to come to one's assistance?

The Sahabi (RA), on face value, had a good and perfectly logical intellectual argument. But it was contrary to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)'s instruction. The final verdict of Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was that he had not attained the taqarrub ilallah which the other three had attained, even though they were deprived of attending the Jumu'ah namaz led by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

To re-iterate: the basis of qurb is ittiba'yet! This point is emphasised time and again in the Qur'an shareef.

Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): If you love Allah, follow me. (S.3 A.31)

Whoso obeyeth the messenger obeyeth Allah,

and whoso turneth away: We have not sent thee as a warder over them. (S.4 A.80)

O ye who believe! Obey Allah and His messenger and turn not away from him when ye hear him (speak). (S.8 A.20)

The crux of the matter is: do not intellectualize (i.e. do not put forward your own deductions and conclusions) in the face of an instruction from your senior and elder.

We had drifted to this topic when speaking of the headlong rush to sit in the majliskhana. An ayet of the Qur'an shareef was recited earlier wherein Allah Ta'ala is instructing us about mu'asharat. The root of the word "mu'asharat" is "ishrat", which means gaiety/happy social life/pleasurable. We are thus to spend our life in this world in "aysh-wa-ishrat" - in gaiety and happiness; in delightful ease and comfort; in peace and tranquility with one another.

Mu'asharat is dependant on a compatible relationship; and relationships are dependant on acceptable behaviour from all sides. Each person should have such a relationship with the next person that there is nothing but sheer joy and comfort. There should be no displeasure. Relationships should be full of ease - not disease!

One should avoid harshness in speech and action. One's words and the tone of one's voice should be such as to convey ease and comfort, otherwise the desired mu'asharat is disrupted.

6.PARENTS

The ayet recited pertains to rushing headlong as well. We will come to that. The ayet, however, starts off with:

(Show) kindness unto parents - One's behaviour towards one's parents should be such that one does not incur their slightest displeasure. One should not allow unpleasantness to develop between them and oneself. That is how one should live with one's parents.

In the entire creation, after Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), of course, the status of the rights of one's parents as far as obedience is concerned, supercedes the rights of all others! To this degree:-

You are in the house making ibadat, performing nafl namaz or reciting the Qur'an shareef. Your father is ill. He calls you. Interrupt your ibadat, break your namaz, and run to attend to him immediately.

To repeat: in the entire creation, the pre-eminence that the rights of one's parents enjoy, no other creation's rights can match. This pre-eminence has been determined by Allah Ta'ala. The status of one's mother and father is such that one's relationship with them should be of the utmost cordiality and kindness. One should not cause them the slightest harm, grief or upset.

Yet, what do we see?

- The son utters such words as to hurt them.
- Their hard-earned money kept safely in the cupboard, is taken away quietly by the son. Their pockets are emptied. When the money is needed they find no money in their pockets, and the box in the cupboard is also empty. Who has taken the money? Understandably, they are most upset and in a ' state of panic. The son has not only caused them financial loss but also mental anguish.

Yes, you may find a parent who is an Allah-wala. His reaction is different. He remains unruffled. "Somebody or other must have taken the money. Let him be." His attitude is indifferent. He sees it from another angle: 'Money is a perishable item. As far as needs are concerned the greater need will be in the Hereafter! I forgive the poor fellow who took the money, for I will be adequately compensated for my loss in the Hereafter.' The Allah-wala does not have to think. This response is automatic.

Those who are Allah-wala, the ahlullah, do come across such situations. These are situations involving tarbiyet (character training). It is in this light that the response of the ahlullah is mentioned, so that you may be aware of it.

It has been written that once the ahlullah have established a proper connection with Allah Ta'ala, a true ta'alluq ma'allah, then, no matter what befalls them, they are not upset in the least. If an ahlullah does get upset, it is a clear indication that he has not established that connection (ta'alluq) with Allah Ta'ala which is the desired connection. Once an ahlullah has established a proper connection with Allah Ta'ala, there is absolutely no question of his getting upset!

Toil and labour are connected with one's physical body, but being upset is a condition of the heart. A real ahlullah, one who has established the proper connection with Allah Ta'ala, will have absolutely

no reason to be upset within himself. This is one of the effects of ta'alluq ma'allah. This is what differentiates him from one who does not have this ta'alluq. Otherwise there would be no apparent difference between the two.

7.THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF BABA FARID SHAKR GANJ (RA)

Which reminds me of Baba Farid Shakr Ganj (RA). As some of you may know, he was a great scholar and sufi. He was the khalifa of Hadhrat Qutbuddin Bukhtiar Kaki (RA), and went on to become a great sheikh himself.

Baba Farid Shakr Ganj (RA) related the following in his majlis:

"I have met some 600 auliya-allah."

(Note: A person has only one sheikh to whom he turns to for his is/ah (self-rectification. However, in that amazing era people undertook long journeys on foot. It was not unusual for them to meet several buzurgs from time to time during such journeys, but they were not given the status of one's sheikh).

8.THE FIRST QUESTION

"I put a set of questions to all of them. The first question was: 'Who is an

aqil (intelligent person)? "All 600 gave the same reply: 'An aqil is one who recognises his aqa'."

An intelligent person is one who recognises his Lord. In worldly matters it is essential for a slave to know his master. If a slave does not recognise this simple fact then how would he experience happiness in this world?

This recognition is even more important when it comes to our Real Master. This recognition is called ma'rifat.

All 600 auliya-allah whom Baba Farid Shakr Ganj (RA) questioned at various times, all separately gave the same reply. This consensus is called "ijma", and ijma is binding.

So, the consensus of all 600 auliya-allah was that an aqil, an intelligent person, is one who recognises his aqa, his Lord and Master. In other words an aqil is one who has ma'rifat. Now, what is marifat.

Very briefly, without going into long explanations, ma'rifat is to recognise the different qualities of Allah Ta'ala in detail, and to act constantly and consistently according to this knowledge. A person endowed with ma'rifat will be called an arif billah. An aqil will thus be an arifbillah.

However, nowadays a completely different meaning is given to the word aqil in everyday conversation. Every shrewdy, every trickster, every cheat, every fraud - any person who knows how to get his own over others - is called an aqil, a clever person. "He is very clever", is what we hear about such persons. "He knows how to get his way." In modern terminology, the unintelligent are called intelligent, the mindless are said to be clever.

The real meaning of aqil has been stated above - an intelligent person is one who recognises his Lord and Master. The intelligence of the auliya-allah is superior to that of any other group. The fact that

600 auliya-allah testified to the above definition of an aqil shows an unsurpassable consensus of those who are really intelligent.

9.THE SECOND QUESTION

"The second question I put forward was the following:" Baba Farid Shahr

Ganj (RA) continued:

"Who is called hushyar?"

Seeing we have present here today some noted scholars, let me explain: "Hushyar" is an adjective derived from two Persian words, "Hush" and "yar" "Hush" means "sense / consciousness." "Yaristan" means to be of strength. Combining the two words we arrive at the following meaning; "one who has strength of mind; one who is sensible."

What was the reply to the question: "Who is hushyar?" "All 600 auliya-allah gave the same reply: 'Hushyar is one who is not upset (pareshan) in any situation.'"

This answer is of great practical value. After hearing this reply and bearing it in mind, we should look within ourselves and take stock. What is our state when matters go against our temperament? Day and night we face situations which we find unpleasant - gee desire matters to proceed according to our wishes and just the opposite happens. What is our reaction?

The word "pareshan" is also Persian, again a combination of two words. "Paridan" which means "to fly off", and "shan" which means "state/condition". "Pareshan" will thus mean: "his condition/state has flown off' i.e. He is not calm and serene. He is now disturbed and perturbed, anxious and frightened, ensnared, etc.

Allah forbid, but should you find yourself in such a situation in the future, sit down and think for a while: "What is it that I heard in the majlis here? Why were these topics discussed in such detail, with illustrations and anecdotes? What was my purpose in going to listen to these talks? So, why am I not acting according to the advice? Why am I not training my temperament accordingly? Why am I not drawing my temperament to a position of strength? Why this insipid and lack-lustre condition? Why this dejection? Why am I not in control of my mood? Why cannot I direct my thoughts more positively? Why am I testifying to my weakness? Why am I showing cowardice?"

Do you understand?

A person in a position of responsibility will encounter such situations more than others. The moment a problem arises, the person becomes ruffled. This is sufficient proof that he is not hushyar. This responsible person, this manager, this man who is now a father, this newly appointed principal, is now pareshan. His temperament is out of control. He is anxious and perturbed. He is unable to think clearly. He cannot bear the upset. His inner turmoil is apparent to everybody.

These are important matters to bring to your attention, especially in this age, where such situations are met with frequently by the ihle-ilm (scholars). A person in a position of responsibility should have an even temperament (a mustaqil mizag), and a strong heart. He should be hushyar. He should be circumspect, taking into account all aspects of a situation, in front, behind, above, below and both sides.

Is the message getting through? Are these not important topics to discuss? If you had come here expecting me to ask "Now much muraqabah did you do today? What is your hal (state) during muraqabah (meditation)? How much zikr did you make? 3000 or 10.000? So much! Well done! If that is what you were expecting me to ask, I am sorry to disappoint you!

Dear Mu'min, do not only build your Akhirat, but build your Dunya as well! This world is a reflection of Jannat for you, provided you live as you should be living. As for Jannat, it is already there for you.

These are topics we heard discussed by our Hadhratwala (Hadhrat Ashraf Ali Thanvi R.A.). Why did he discuss them? Not for entertainment - it was no cinema! These topics were discussed to direct and develop one's thinking along certain lines; to bring firmness in one's mind, to teach the appropriate mu'asharati lifestyle of ease and comfort, according to place and person.

The individual, and especially one in a position of responsibility, should know how to act correctly in any particular situation. He should not panic when confronted by an unexpected problem and blurt out, "No. No. I can't do it. This task is beyond me. Ask someone else."

Subhanallah! What courage! What bravery!

He is easily ruffled. His composure is gone. He is uncontrolled. His facial expression has lost its equanimity. His words are hasty. His whole attitude portrays his fright.

Be hushyar! Do not be perturbed by any situation. This quality is connected with one's heart and mind. As stated already, toil and effort are connected with the physical body, and is associated with physical tiredness. To be perturbed and panic-stricken, to feel crushed, is a condition of the heart. This person's body may be strong, but his heart is weak. I have seen great wrestlers with massive, sturdy physiques getting frightened when confronted by one less massive and sturdy. As stated, fear and panic arise from the heart and not one's physique.

So, who is hushyar? One who panics? One who feels crushed? One who loses control of himself? No. Definitely not! Hushyar is one who is not perturbed by any situation.

10. THE BOY AND THE ELEPHANT

Hadhratwala related an incident to us to illustrate this: an elephant from the king's palace had suddenly become wild. It broke loose and was on a rampage, heading for the village. The local people were quickly informed, and warned to stay indoors. The village shops were hurriedly closed. In next to no time the streets were empty. But a young boy got left outside, and the rampaging elephant was headed straight for the child. The boy saw the elephant thundering towards him. What to do? A pup was lying nearby, unaware of the impending catastrophe. The boy acted quickly. He grabbed the pup by one of its legs, twirled the pup around his head for it to gain momentum and then hurled it directly at the raging elephant. The startled pup hit the elephant on the face and started yelping loudly. The elephant in turn became startled at this and came to a sudden halt. Its attention got diverted to the squealing, clawing pup on its trunk, and the elephant actually started backing away.

Hadhratwala's comment was, 'Look, he was only a boy, but he was hushyar!'

The stampeding elephant did not get him to panic. He did not lose his wits. His senses and composure were maintained, and an excellent manouvre to stop the elephant came to mind. A massive, raging elephant was repelled by a small quick-thinking boy making use of a little pup.

A small, weak boy succeeded in a major task, and the massive, strong elephant failed in its purpose of destroying the little boy. Allah Ta'ala had placed the strategy into the boy's mind whereby he got saved.

When one maintains one's composure and one does not allow one's senses to become disarrayed, the greatest task will be easily solved, insha'allah ta'ala. A special characteristic of being hushyar is the effect it has on one's thinking. Allah Ta'ala has made it a feature of keeping cool and calm that a plan will come to mind appropriate to the situation, to bring success to one's affairs. Try this exercise: think back. Try and visualise any such situation in the past where you were thrown into panic. Ask yourself, "Had I known then what I have learnt today would I still have been panic-stricken? Would I still have been restless and upset? Would I still have sat down uselessly, or crept into bed and hid under the blankets?"

Your answer should be, "Of course not! Had I known then what I know today, I would not have got into such a state!" There may be some of you sitting here who had to face such situations in the past, and you should be thinking as I have just outlined. There may be others who may face such situations in the future (Allah forbid), in which case you should make use of these talks and not become upset and panic-stricken. Problems may arise from any direction: from one's wife or children, or from one's students, or one's servants or employees, or one's employer or superior. One's resolve should be to control ones temperament and gain the upperhand over one's thoughts by putting into practice what one has heard here today. Insha-allah ta'ala. In this way you will not allow yourself to be crushed or overwhelmed, or allow your serenity to be disturbed, or give an opportunity for others to mock you. Insha-allah ta'ala.

We are still discussing Baba Farid Shakr Ganj (RA)'s second question "Who is hushyar?" All 600 gave the same reply, "One who is not pareshan in any situation." We are humans, and we are bound to encounter difficulties. However, bearing in mind the measures to safeguard oneself and acting promptly on these, we will not go off the track. Or if there is someone there to prompt one, then too one will be assured of overcoming the difficulty.

11.THE BATTLE OF UHUD

I am reminded of the Battle of Uhud. Khalid Bin Walid, who had not accepted Islam as yet, was in command of the Qurayshi cavalry. He was a great statesman and strategist. He saw a breach in the defences of the Muslims, grabbed the opportunity and attacked from behind, causing a severe setback to the Muslims. During the reversal Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was injured on the head and one tooth became shahid. The ranks of the Sahaba (RA) were in disarray.

A loud cry went up from the enemy lines. "Qad mate Muhammedun." They announced that they had killed Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). You can now imagine the condition of the Sahaba (RA). Their success was turning into defeat. Many lives were being lost. Their ranks were in disarray as the enemy attacked from behind and in front. And now this announcement! Their love for Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was such that this cry from the enemy shattered their very hearts! If Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was gone, what was there left for them?

However, another cry also went up, "Look! Look! Here comes Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)!" The Sahaba (RA) turned around and saw Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) coming forward. On seeing him, the change in the Sahaba (RA) was dramatic. Their despondency changed to jubilation. Their spirits were regained and their disarray turned to orderliness. They quickly grouped themselves around Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and attacked the enemy with regained fervour, driving the enemy back. Defeat turned to victory.

A temporary upset, a short-lived confusion, was replaced with sense and success on seeing Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). There were some among the Sahaba (RA) who had kept calm and had said, "Even if Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is martyred, Allah Ta'ala is alive!" Allah Ta'ala states in the Qur'an shareef.

Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dies or is slain, you will turn back on your heels? (S.3 A.144)

If Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) were to pass away, will you leave your iman and turn back? Allah is alive. You have brought iman for Him. There were Ambiya before this, and they also passed away.

The Sahaba (RA) were always calm and collected. This was how they were trained, to be hushyar. The disarray at the Battle of Uhud was short-lived. The depth of their grief was such that it caused a momentary lapse. A temporary weakness showed, but not of such a nature as to throw them completely off-balance. That moment passed, and they were as before, calm and collected.

There may be some students who may have had some doubts arising in their minds when reading about the Battle of Uhud. The above explanation should suffice to dispel those doubts.

Do you understand?

I keep on asking whether you understand, because these are lessons. This is a type of class being conducted for students. What students? Anyone seeking tarbiyyat, anyone seeking his islah, anyone desiring to develop courage and bravery, anyone seeking Islamic sturdiness.

12. THE POWER OF THOUGHT

These are prescriptions. Just as one finds medical prescriptions for bodily ailments, these are prescriptions for illnesses affecting the heart. These prescriptions are of great value, greater than any elixir of gamirah-gaza-ambr and mushk. These elixirs are undoubtedly of value, invigorating the body, but our prescriptions are greater in value. How is that? By causing one to conquer one's thoughts! Gamirah-gaza-ambr and mushk will cause the body to become strong. Our prescriptions will cause the heart to become strong. Combine the two and you have strength on strength. Conquering one's thoughts is an amazing feat and is greater in importance.

Here is a personal experience: In days gone by, I lived across the courtyard where Bhajan now stays. I used to sleep alone. (Also, I used to travel alone, until I suffered a short illness. The doctors then stopped me from travelling alone or even sleeping in a room by myself.) As I was saying, I was asleep when I felt as if something had bitten me. My eyes opened. I felt a tingling in my foot. A fearful thought (wehm) crossed my mind: Did a snake bite me?

Remember that wehm (doubt/ groundless fear) is a force in opposition to aql (intelligence). These two forces are called Quwate Wehmia and Quwate Aqlia respectively. Should the force of doubt (quwate wehmia) progressively increase in a person, it becomes an illness which is very difficult to cure or control.

This thought that it could have been a snake that had bitten me, together with the tingling sensation in the foot, had an upsetting effect on me. I got up, opened the door and started climbing upstairs. Bhaijan was staying upstairs. Having climbed up a few steps, I told myself, "What nonsense is this? Why disturb somebody for nothing, especially seeing he is asleep? Did you see a snake?" I climbed down and went back to bed. But then the same thought came back: What if it were a snake? I got up again, opened the door and started climbing up again. Again, I stopped and scolded myself. I retraced my steps and went back to bed.

This happened a few times. Then I took a grip on myself and told myself firmly: It must have been a mouse. There are mice round and about. Nothing happens with a bite from a mouse. I firmly held on to this thought and overpowered my other thought. The final result was that the burning and tingling in my foot disappeared and I slept soundly thereafter!

With taw0q from Allah Ta'ala, and with the barkat of my sheikh, one thought had conquered another thought. We had heard such talks from our sheikh, just as you are hearing such talks today.

Thoughts have a very powerful influence on a person. A number of incidents spring to mind. You just keep on listening! Hadhratwala related the following:

A farmer had finished ploughing his land. The ploughshare had gone loose and the farmer, carrying the plough on his head, took it to the blacksmith to be axed. As he handed the plough over he commented, "I had this plough on my head and it felt as if something had bitten me. What could it have been? It must have been something or other." He dismissed the matter from his mind. The blacksmith took the plough to his workshop. As he wiggled the loose ploughshare he noticed a little snake in one of the crevices. He quickly smothered the snake and killed it there and then, and went on to fix the ploughshare. The blacksmith brought back the plough and handed it to the farmer without making mention of the snake. The farmer took the plough and went home.

The following year the farmer was back with the plough. The blacksmith pulled the loose ploughshare out and the remains of the dead snake fell out.

The farmer stepped back in fright and cried out, "What's this?" The simple blacksmith naively said, "It's a dead snake. This is the very thing that bit you last year." "This snake bit me? A snake! A snake..." The farmer's voice tailed off and he collapsed. He was carried home where he died shortly afterwards. You will note that at the time of the snake-bite he was not affected. A year later the overwhelming power of the thought of a snake-bite killed him.

What lessons were not taught to us by Hadhratwala! He prepared his khuddam (attendants) not only for the Hereafter, but refined them for this world as well! Do not be hasty and come out half-baked. Allah Ta'ala has created a potential force within yourself, which is the power of thought (quwate khialiah). Take work from it and do not waste it. Use it properly, on the right occasions. Do not be infirm in your thinking. Be forceful (pakka).

Here is another qissah which we heard from the lips of Hadhratwala:

It was Ramadhan shareef, and the hafiz saheb was reciting the Qur'an shareef in tarawih. A certain simple - minded person was also attending the tarawih. He told the people that the day Surah Yasin shareef was to be recited, they should inform him beforehand. The people forgot and the hafiz saheb came to Yasin shareef and recited beyond. One day this person asked, "So many days have passed and we have not reached Yasin shareef yet?" The people said, "Why not? Yasin shareef was recited some time back and hafiz saheb is way beyond." He asked, "Was I present when Yasin shareef was recited?" The people said, "Why not? You were here every night. How could you have missed it?"

The simple - minded person was dismayed, "I was here when Yasin shareef was recited! I won't be able to save myself now!"

The reason for his dismay was the following: He had seen on a number of occasions that when a person is dying, people read Yasin shareef. Of course, this is done to ease the death of the person, to allow the rooh to leave the body without difficulty. This person saw Yasin shareef being recited and the person over whom it was recited, died. The thought became fixed in the person's mind that, that person who listens to Yasin shareef will die. If he were to hear Yasin shareef he would die. Obviously, reason and logic had nothing to do with it.

This thought was so overpowering that he fell unconscious. He was carried home but he did not recover, and passed away.

These incidents are rarities, but they adequately illustrate the potential power of thought and serve as valuable lessons. These discussions lend strength to one's thinking. On the appropriate occasion these talks will bring calmness and serenity within the person.

Inner strength is not dependant on changing the thinking of the next person. No. One should change one's own thinking with the power of one's own thoughts. (I have already mentioned my personal experience.) This produces tremendous inner strength. However, we find people sitting down with one fixed idea which they are unwilling to change. That is why feebleness is increasing day by day.

Just remember the qissah related by Hadhratwala: how hushyar the little boy turned out to be when confronted by a raging elephant. He was unperturbed and maintained his dignity.

To repeat: the therapy for thoughts is through thought. This is a special branch of knowledge called Nasiyati Ilm.

We have discussed the second question. We now come to the third question asked by Baba Farid Shahr Ganj (RA).

13.THE THIRD QUESTION

"The third question I asked, was: 'Who is one who is gani (rich)?"

I am sure you are all thinking that the answer is simple: a garii is one who has one lakh rupees (100,000 rupees). Let us see...

"All 600 auliya-allah gave the same reply: A gani is one who has no tama'in him."

The 600 auliya-allah are saying that a rich person is one who has no avarice in him. And we thought it was possessing thousands and millions! A person may well possess millions, but if he has avarice (tama') in him, he is not rich (gani) - Tama' is the direct opposite of being gani.

14. THE FOURTH QUESTION

We now come to the fourth question.

"The fourth question I put to them was: 'Who is one who is garish (poor)?'"

"All 600 auliya-allah gave the same reply: 'A garib is one who has no qana'af.'" A poor person is one who has no contentment, Qana'at (contentment) is the direct opposite of greed (hirs). That person who has greed (hirs) is not wealthy (gani); and that person who has contentment (qana'at) is not poor (garib).

Let us ponder. Despite possessing material wealth, one is still filled with greed and avarice. What kind of richness is that? Richness (gena) is a quality connected with the heart, not with one's outside condition. One speaks about a "big-hearted person", meaning a generous person, indicating richness to be connected with a person's heart.

Gena (richness) is one of the praiseworthy qualities, (the akhlaq hamidah) which are connected with the heart. On the other hand tama' (avarice) is one of the akhlaq razilah (the bad qualities) which are connected with the nafs. Similarly qana'at (contentment) is of the akhlaq hamidah, connected with the heart. On the other hand hirs (greed) is of the akhlaq razilah, connected with the nafs.

The person with hirs (greed) is obsessed with materialism, thinking of nothing else day and night, desiring his wealth to double and treble. He has no contentment.

The person with qana'at (contentment) is at the opposite pole. He avoids haraam wealth. He does not look with eyes of desire at others' wealth. He is contented - he makes sabr on meagre possessions.

This discussion on the four questions asked by Baba Farid Shahr Ganj (RA) form part of our discussion on mu'asharat. That person who is an aqil, who has ma'rifat, his mu'asharat is made. That person who is hushyar, who is not perturbed by any situation, his mu'asharat is made. That person who has no tama' but has gena - one who has no avarice but possesses richness - his mu'asharat is made. That person who has no hirs, but has qana'at - one who has no greed but has contentment - his mu'asharat is made. Such a person, within himself, has attained the status of sabr as commanded by Allah Ta'ala in the following ayet:

O ye who believe! Endure

O you Believers, if some personal difficulty befalls you, one which causes you fear and anxiety, some illness, a shortfall of money, etc, isbiru! You should remain steadfast. Do not be frightened. These are expected worldly problems. Living in this world how can you expect problems not to arise? What type of false hope is that? So, when a difficulty arises - isbiru! Do not be crushed.

These are difficulties of a personal nature. On the other hand you may encounter difficulties from others. Then too: ... and outdo all others in endurance,

Others may say or do things not to your liking. Then too do not be frightened by their opposition. Be courageous and steadfast. Do not lose your composure. Sabiru!

15.POLITICS

The ayet does not end there but goes on:

... and be ever ready. (S.3 A.200)

"Rabitu" applies at a national level. When threats are encountered from other countries, one's country should protect its frontiers by building a firm defence force. There should be no weaknesses in the defences so as to allow the opposing forces to enter. The "rabitu" is instructing us in siyasit (politics) - the protection of one's country's frontiers against invading forces. In a way "isbiru" and "sabiru" are also siyasit - siyasit of the batin: protect your internal milieu from any forces wanting to disrupt it.

What is siyasit (politics / diplomacy)? It is defined as "tadbire hasn": the temperament has to operate at such a level of statemanship that the best of methods are adopted to repulse any opposition that may present itself. This is siyasit. Siyasit (politics / diplomacy) is not the deceit and fraud implied by the word today.

That is why we say: That is no shariat which does not include siyasit; and that is no siyasit which does not fall within the shariat. Remember the above very well. You find people saying, "What connection is there between the shariat and siyasit? The two are independant." The politicians say that the shariat should not intrude into siyasit. This view was expressed to me personally by the principal of a major college in Bangalore during a conversation we were having. I had been listening silently to him, but when he expressed the view that siyasit is independant of the shariat, I spoke out. "That is not the case," I explained. "There is no such thing as a shariat if it does not include siyasit. And siyasit can only be such if it conforms to the shariat. Every aspect of siyasit falls under the shariat. Siyasit is an important branch of the shariat."

Siyasit is not sayisiyat - looking after horses!

Our theme is mu'asharat - to live a life of ease and comfort with one another in the social context. The relevant ayet of the Qur'an shareef was quoted to you. It starts off with the rights of parents:

(Show) kindness unto parents,

One should adopt the best of conduct towards one's parents. The rights of parents have been given top priority. Their rights are most important, coming first and taking precedence over others' with regard to respect, honour and obedience.

16.RELATIVES

This does not mean that the rights of others should be ignored. The ayet continues: ...and unto near kindred, This refers to those relatives who are close - uncles and aunts, in-laws, etc. They should also be treated with respect and hospitality. With them too one should not behave in such a way as to cause any unpleasantness.

17. ORPHANS

... and orphans

These poor ones have nobody. So, do not ignore them. Our good conduct should extend towards them as well. The ayet simply states this. The Hadith shareef extols the virtues: should you rub an affectionate hand on their heads, the amount of neqi written in your account will be equal to the amount of hair on their heads! Who is capable of doing this? Only that Muslim in whose nature there has appeared some humility, some humbleness. Only such a person is capable of showing affection to these poor, lonely orphans by lovingly rubbing their heads and talking to them with kindness and magnanimity, cheering their forlorn hearts.

18. THE POVERTY STRICKEN ... and the needy,

The poverty stricken - those who have just sufficient for one meal. There is a difference between the misakin (poverty stricken) and the faqir (destitute). The faqir is that unfortunate who does not have enough even for a single meal.

19. NEIGHBOURS CLOSE - BY

...and the near neighbour,

Those neighbours who are near. With them too one should conduct oneself well.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Allah Ta'ala sent such orders with regard to neighbours that I feared that they may even have to be given a share in one's inheritance."

This gives an indication of the rights neighbours have over one. The qissah about Hadhratwala in this regard has been mentioned several times. I make no apology for repeating it. Repetition occurs in the Qur'an shareef as well. For example the qissah of Hadhrat Musa (A.S.) and Firoun have been repeated several times.

The object of repetition is to embed that particular lesson in one's heart, so that one can easily recall what is imbued in the heart when the occasion arises, and then act accordingly. It is for this reason that Hadhratwala used to say that one should read a kitab at least three times. The first reading is merely looking at the words. A little bit here and there will be understood. Only after the third reading will one understand the contents.

The qissah concerning Hadhratwala:

It was night time and Hadhratwala was asleep. He was a light sleeper....

His eating was also very light: one to one-and-a-half chapatis at night, some milk before retiring. My Hadhratwala was amazing in every way. From time to time he used to relate to us incidents from his personal life, giving us an insight into his amazing lifestyle. Speaking about his sleep, he once said, "Sometimes I am unable to sleep and lie with eyes wide open. I look around and see the rest of the household sleeping peacefully. I feel tremendously pleased: even if I cannot sleep, the rest of the household was sleeping comfortably!"

What a clean heart! Whereas we? We are the direct opposite. We grudge others their comfort! But Hadhratwala's heart used to gladden at the comfort of others.

Another insight: Hadhratwala had a temperament that was amazingly organised and systematic. He told us, "I keep pencil and paper by my cushion. Whilst busy writing a kitab, at times my eyes open at night, and some idea or topic flashes through my mind, worthy of being included in the kitab. I immediately write it down. Who knows whether I will still remember it in the morning?"

System and organisation are typified here. Our condition is such however, that we would be more worried about our sleep: "If I were to look for a pen and paper and sit down to write, my sleep would get spoiled!"

Hadhratwala gave ilm priority over sleep. The preciousness of Deeni knowledge was greater than that of sleep.

Back to our qissah:

Being a light sleeper, Hadhratwala's eyes suddenly opened. Something had disturbed his sleep: the sound of somebody groaning in pain reached his ears. That was enough to make his sleep disappear completely. Hadhratwala's nature was soft, very soft. Hadhratwala used to say, "It is a good thing I have no children. Why? Because I have a soft nature. One does not know what children get up to, and, with my soft nature, it would have been very difficult for me. It is a very good thing I have no children!" Hadhratwala had been maligned by people saying that he was vehement and severe. Hadhratwala's reply to this accusation was as follows:

I have no shiddat (vehemence) in me at all. However, I confess I do have hiddat (sharpness). I admit that at times when some ill manners, something concerning tarbiyet, comes before me, sharpness does enter my attitude. Yes, I do show some hiddat then.

"But shiddat - that I should put somebody in trouble or cause him unnecessary difficulty? No, never! As to hiddat. I admit to that."

Note the superb self-analysis!

Hadhratwala continued, "And, dear brother, the hiddat also has its reasons. What can I say? Firstly I was born through the dua of a majzub. All the children my parents had, died shortly after birth. Once a majzub was in the area and somebody from the household mentioned this plight to him. He made dua: 'A child be born, then another. One is for me, the other for you. I was born shortly afterwards.'"

This is the first factor, that Hadhratwala was born through the dua of a majzub (one lost in divine contemplation), who has greater hiddat in him.

"The second factor is that I had as my wet nurse in infancy, the wife of a butcher.

"The third factor is that I was given strychnine."

Strychnine was used in medications. Its effect is to produce heat.

"And brother, the fourth factor is that our genealogy is Farouqi."

Hadhratwala's family on the father's side, are descendents of Hadhrat Omar Farouq (RA), who had hiddat in his nature.

"That is why my nature has hiddat in it. But not shiddat. People have baselessly maligned me. Those who live with me, and have had an opportunity to observe closely, will vouchsafe this fact that I am soft, so soft that you will not find anyone else as soft. Others are being frightened from coming here. Yes, others are being frightened off. But carry on. What harm is it to me?"

Back to our qissah:

The sound of somebody groaning in pain reached his ears. Hadhratwala was now wide awake. He went downstairs. In both houses, that of Baripirani saheba and Chotipirani saheba, servants were kept for duties outside the house. He woke up Sulaiman saheb, the servant.

"I hear somebody groaning. Can you find out who it is and what the problem is?"

Nowadays who bothers? All of you sitting here think. Does anybody bother? In this day and age even if the wife is groaning the husband will not trouble himself to find out why. Why lose one's sleep? What chance of bothering about the groaning outside?

The servant went to inquire and returned shortly to report, "Baribi, the neighbour, says that her daughter-in-law is in labour. She is having severe pains without making much progress."

"Ofo!" Hadhratwala said, "I still need to make ghusl....Never mind." Hadhratwala went immediately to make ghusl. He then wrote out a ta'wiz. There is a specific ta'wiz to be used during childbirth to ease the pain of labour.

Seeing that a Qur'anic ayet is written in making a ta'wiz, the person must be in a state of taharat (purity), and he should also have wudhu. We used to see Hadhratwala write a ta'wiz on a piece of paper, and have a second blank piece of paper underneath with which to cover the ta'wiz paper. Hadhratwala used to explain, "This is just a precaution. One is writing a Qur'anic ayet and one does not know whether the person to whom it is handed has wudhu or not. If he has no wudhu, how can he touch it? That is why the second (blank) paper is wrapped around it."

It is quite permissible to take the ta'wiz in one's hand if it is wrapped up thus, even if one has no wudhu. These teaching points Hadhratwala used to mention for our benefit.

In any case, the servant took the ta'wiz to the neighbour. A short while later, with the Grace of Allah Ta'ala, and the barkat of Hadhratwala, the infant was born.

This qissah is one to ponder over in the context of our discussion. Remember we are discussing...

...the neighbour who is close by, whose voice will reach one's ears. The neighbour far away will not be readily heard.

So, you have seen Hadhratwala's behaviour in this regard. What have you seen? You have seen how he spoiled his sleep to fulfill the rights of the neighbour close by. Not only that, but he took on the extra effort of making ghusl at that time of the night in order to fulfill this right completely. At times a sheikh will disclose personal details of his behaviour to his mureeds, for the lessons contained

therein as far as tarbiyet is concerned. He does this in the same vein as quoting incidents concerning others - for the lesson or example contained in them.

These personal details are related for the benefit of those close to him. Of course, there are others sitting and listening as well, but these listen indifferently. Not so those who are close to the sheikh - they are greatly affected because of their great love and affection for their sheikh, affection not showered on others.

The neighbours close by. Allah Ta'ala is plainly giving a command on good relationships and excellent behaviour with those neighbours who are close by. This command is obviously concerning mu'asharati lifestyle, and not mas'alas concerning trade, lending and borrowing!

20. NEIGHBOURS AT A DISTANCE

The ayet continues:

... and the distant neighbour

The neighbour a distance away. Good relationships and excellent behaviour should extend to them as well, and not only to the neighbour close by.

Note the sequence: first come parents, then relatives, then the poor and the orphans, then the neighbours close by, and now the neighbours at a distance. Do not think you can ignore them, for they also have rights over you. If, for some reason or other, the immediate neighbour is unconcerned, you, as a distant neighbour, should have some concern.

Here is another application of the ayet: Several students share a dormitory in the "Boarding." Amongst the students are some who are poor, others may be better off. The one student is a neighbour of the next. But you find that a poor student takes ill and the others in the room do not bother. His groaning is ignored. Nobody wipes his brow or presses his aching back. Nobody makes an effort to get medicines for him.

Do you understand? Do you see how the practical side of the ayet fits in? These are points to bear in mind. This is the mu'asharati lifestyle.

Our akabir (pious predecessors) exemplified this lifestyle. It is not necessary to labour the point, but, nevertheless, let me relate an incident. I had become ill. I was living across the courtyard, upstairs still. (This was long before the other episode mentioned earlier on.) I got the news that Hadhratwala had come from Thana Bhawan specifically to visit me. There was a chair and an extra charpai in the room, but the door frame was low. What if Hadhratwala was to knock his head as he entered? While these thoughts were racing through my mind Hadhratwala walked into the room. Salaams were exchanged and Hadhratwala enquired about my health. He then went to sit on the charpai. I slipped off the bed and went to sit on the chair, facing him. Hadhratwala suggested, "Why do you not lie down?" I was feeling strong enough to sit, so I did not take up the suggestion. Hadhratwala merely said, "Very well."

Hadhratwala remained silent. He was sitting with his head bent down. I was sitting directly in front of him. After a few moments I started getting palpitations. A fine sweat broke out all over my body. I

said, "Hadhrat, I am feeling a bit weak. I will lie down." Hadhratwala said, "I had already suggested to you that you should lie down to rest on the charpai. Very well." I went to lie down.

Hafiz Manfa'at saheb was also in the room. In those early days there were only two of us teaching here, Hafiz Manfa'at saheb and myself. Hadhratwala had actually sent me here, and we were under his patronage.

Hafiz Manfa'at saheb saw me perspiring and came forward to remove my mozas, (light-leather socks), which I used to wear when the weather was cold. He started taking off the right moza first. I stopped him. "No take off the left first."

The correct procedure as far as clothes, mozas, shoes, etc. is concerned is to take off from the left first and then the right. When putting on, start from the right.

After a short while Hadhratwala left. Then I understood what had happened: Hadhratwala had made tawajju on me for the relief of illness. Hadhratwala's concentration with his head bent down, and my feeling light-headed while sitting in front of him, was his tawajju on me. After that I felt much better. The fever and weakness disappeared.

Hafiz Manfa'at saheb's routine was to go to Thana Bhawan in the evenings, stay the night there, and return in the morning. The following morning, on returning from Thana Bhawan, he told me, "As I was leaving the khanqa Hadhratwala saw me and asked me how you were. I said that you were now well. Hadhratwala was pleased." From this incident you can gauge the quality of the mu'asharati lifestyle of the seniors towards the juniors, how much affection they had for the juniors. Hadhratwala also took care to attend regularly the annual jalsa that took place here in Ramadhan. He used to arrive here in a palki (litter) in order to participate in the jalsa.

We are discussing the rights of the neighbour at a distance. Those of you who are ihle-ilm, would have studied the translations and tafsir of this ayet. You should judge to what extent our ihle-ilm have applied this ayet.

Yes, those who are applying this ayet practically are the sufiya-ikram, the ulema-e-rabbani, the ulema-e-haqqani. These are ihle-ilm who understand the Qur'an and Hadith shareefas related to the batin.

Is the Qur'an shareef merely to recite, or to act on as well? The Qur'an shareef is to be studied, to be understood and to be propagated. Even after having studied it, if we do not act on its injunctions who do we expect to act on them? The non-Muslim, Tom, Dick and Harry?

Think about it. Do not look at me - what must I do if these are the topics that come to mind?

This topic came to mind because of your headlong rush into the majlis-khana, falling over each other, one on top of the other. This made me speak on the mu'asharati lifestyle. There are still more aspects to discuss.

The Qur'an shareef is there for us to practice on its injunctions. Among these injunctions of Allah Ta'ala are those related to mu'asharat. Various incidents from the lives of our akabir have been related to illustrate the application of these injunctions, so that we may pattern our lives accordingly. A molvi, one who has studied the Qur'an and Hadith shareef, should be aware of his

status and live accordingly. That is, he should continuously be aware of the mu'asharat set forth in the Qur'an shareef and Hadith shareef, and he should be continuously watchful of his behaviour. This stock-taking is called ihtisab.

So important is this ihtisab that a country with Islamic rule will have an appointed person as a mohtasib (a person taking hisab), who will go around taking stock of the state of the people.

Omar Farouq (RA), during his Khilafat, used to perform this task himself, patrolling the city of Madina himself. The situation in the country will determine the number of people appointed for this task. One person may not be enough, so others may be required to ensure patrolling takes place day and night.

The mohtasib will keep the ruler informed of the state of the people, both their worldly status and their Deeni status. He will also give guidance to the people accordingly, with hikmat (wisdom), not with hukumat (authoritarianism).

This is at a national level. At the individual level every Muslim is a mohtasib unto himself - he is ever watchful over his nafs. He takes stock of every breath of his. After he speaks he takes stock: "This is what I said. I was speaking to that person. Have I not hurt him in any way by what I said?" This exercise should be carried out regularly every time he speaks, until it becomes a habit to review his spoken words.

There is no such thing as speaking freely. As far as action is concerned, a Muslim definitely has no freedom of action - he is not free to act uninhibitedly, so how can he speak uninhibitedly? Speaking anything, to anybody, at any time - is this the quality of an admi? Is this being civilised?

A Muslim is accountable for his speech as well as his actions. At all times his speech should be respectful and cultured. Honour and dignity should not be discarded.

Do you understand?

Huquqe mu'asharati - the rights of social inter-relationships - include jan (life), mal (wealth), kam (work), ka lam (speech). Our akabir exemplified this lifestyle.

A bhangi (nightsoil cleaner) from Thana Bhawan came to Deoband to meet Maulana Qasim (RA). (This incident was related to us by Hadhratwala).

Maulana Qasim (RA) treated him so hospitably as to make one think that the person was not a bhangi but some relative visiting him. He even ordered a hukkah to be brought for him. After the bhangi had left somebody remarked to Maulana Qasim (RA), "Hadhrat, you showered so much hospitality on him as if he were some visiting relative. He was a mere bhangi."

Maulana Qasim (RA) responded, "You saw him as a mere bhangi. I saw him as a Thanvi - a resident of the town where my sheikh Hajee Saheb resides."

These are matters concerning the heart, concerning one's ta'alluq. They need no explanation. How can one explain the elegance and exquisiteness of the temperaments of our akabir? Take another instance:

Some people from Rampur went for Haj. While in Makkah they also visited Hajee Saheb. (Hajee Saheb had by this time made hijrat from Thana Bhawan and was residing in Makkah). As a gift for Hajee Saheb, these people from Rampur had made a musallah of deer skin, which they presented to Hajee Saheb. Hajee Saheb graciously accepted the gift and took the proffered musallah. He then commented, "But I perceive the scent of Thana Bhawan emanating from this musallah."

One of the visitors said, "We had gone out hunting, but we found no game close by. We eventually landed in the forests of Thana Bhawan, where we spotted this deer and hunted it down. It was our desire to present Hadhrat with a gift, so we made a musallah of its skin. Quite correctly, this musallah is from the skin of a deer from Thana Bhawan."

Such was the exquisiteness of the senses of our akabir. Through mujahada and riyadhat (spiritual exercises) such secrets of tariqat were experienced by them. At times they revealed a little, not to everyone, but to those close to them, those involved in tarbiyat. Otherwise they remained silent. Such incidents would not be understood by all.

Nowadays peoples' attitudes are such that they are cynical and will deny such occurrences. But remember, by denying them one is placing oneself in a potentially dangerous situation. Such a cynic does not get on well with others. He feels uncomfortable in this type of gathering. Yet, you find such a person coming to sit here. His intention is not to rectify himself, so his attitude to the talks is completely negative. Instead of improving, such a person deteriorates, and the respectability in him disappears. Despite being learned he speaks rudely even to his father - disrespectfully addresses him as "tu"!

One is not being derogatory to anybody. These points are mentioned for the sake of the sincere ones, so that they may safeguard themselves by not associating with such people. Not to be misunderstood: those who come for some necessary work are not being prevented from doing so. But to cultivate their friendship even after you know that they are different, that they are such as are vindictive to their own parents?

These are incidental matters. Let us continue:

21. THOSE SITTING CLOSE BY

After mentioning the neighbours close by and at a distance, the ayet carries on:

... and the companion by your side, (Those who are sitting close to you.)

This is what I wished to bring to your attention, even though it comes late in the ayet.

Those sitting close to you in the majlis, see that you conduct yourself properly with them. Neither cause them inconvenience, nor grief. Be considerate when you sit. Do not crowd them. Your sitting with them may be for a short while, as here, or it may be for a lengthy period, as at a jalsa. In coming to sit, or going to make musafah (shake hands), observe the same good manners. Be considerate. Do not push. Do not fall one over another. Do not run, or jump over others. In your haste you may hit somebody with your elbow, knock another with your knee, strike somebody with your feet. This is the application of the Qur'anic ayet in our immediate situation. Do not cause the person next to you any inconvenience or difficulty, neither physically nor in any other way. When speaking do not address him in a hurtful manner.

Parents and relatives have been mentioned. Neighbours have been mentioned. Allah Ta'ala now mentions the people you are sitting with. In a way, they are also your neighbours, but their importance has necessitated that they be mentioned in a special category, the sahibi bil jambe.

Neither by one's speech nor one's actions should we harm or inconvenience the next person. There are other ways of harming the next person.

For example: The person next to you has something in his pocket. Aha! It is a pen. The pen is quietly removed and taken. This is causing him material loss.

Another example: One comes in and sprawls down. The person next to you has now to sit all cramped up. This is causing him physical inconvenience. Etc.

We see thus, that the Qur'an shareef also instructs us as to how to conduct ourselves with the person sitting next to us. All this falls in the category of mu'asharat, which (as Hadhratwala had noted) even the learned and deendar have taken out from the Deen and discarded. In actual fact, mu'asharat is an important aspect of one's life. The friction and unhappiness one sees amongst people are mainly due to degeneration of mu'asharat. Only occasionally is it due to corruption in dealings and transactions (mu'amulat). This is because mu'asharat affects us twenty-four hours a day, whereas mu'amulat have their set times. Mu'asharat affects us in the home and outside; mu'amulat only occur in the business setting.

22. THE WAYFARER

So, let us continue with the ayet:

... and the wayfarer

The musafir, the person on a journey.

Be considerate to others when you are travelling. When we were children we used to hear the older people saying, "Safr ka sakhr". "Sakhr" means Jahannam. Later, when studying Hadith shareef we read in Bukhari shareef:

Journeying is a piece of the Fire of Jahannam.

No matter how comfortable one tries to make one's journey, one cannot equal the comfort and freedom one enjoys at home. At home one can eat at any time, sleep at any time. One can do what one likes, when one likes. This freedom is absent during a journey. Travelling is a big mujahada.

Once, when travelling in England, we arrived at our destination in a certain city. Now, my schedule and habits during travels are the same as those at home. Sleeping has its proper time. No such thing as feeling a bit tired, so have a nap. This has not happened during travels, and it has not happened on arrival back home. Meals have their times. No question of feeling peckish, so have a meal.

When we arrived we were welcomed and then seated, and conversation commenced. Somebody suggested, "Hadhrat, would you care to lie down for a while?"

I replied, "No, it is not my nature to do so." He seemed surprised.

"Hadhrat has travelled such a long distance, and for quite a long time."

I said, "Yes, but during travel my mazhab is different." When those present heard me speak about another mazhab, they were all surprised.

"But we are all of the same mazhab."

"No. During travels my mazhab is different," I repeated. Everybody was now curious. What is this new mazhab Hadhrat is coming with?

I explained, "My mazhab is this that, when about to travel, the moment I set my foot outside my house door, I shut the door on all thoughts of comfort and of getting angry. This is my mazhab when travelling!"

This is so because one comes across many such things that go against one's temperament during one's travels. As a guest at somebody's place you have in mind a certain schedule but your host does just the opposite! Your diet is of a certain nature and you are served the opposite. Etc., etc. If one's temperament is such that it is easily irritated, the next thing that happens is anger wells up, and then this anger is evident in the words one utters.

So, one should lock up one's anger at home and leave aside all thoughts of comfort. After I had explained my "mazhab" my host did not insist on my going to lie down, and we carried on speaking.

Here (in Jalalabad) we have lunch approximately at noon, long before Zuhr. Noon, came and I expected everybody to be getting ready for lunch. Nothing happened. It went on to 1p.m. still nothing. Lunch was served only after Zuhr, which is the custom over there.

So, one has to adjust one's routine, but one does not say anything.

In the cold climate over there, tea is served at odd times. My habit here was to have tea after Zuhr, just before Asr. This was my routine during travels too. Over there, every now and then somebody would offer tea, which I would politely refuse. They commented, "We find you amazing! Others who come to visit us tend to drink tea every now and then. Also, quite a bit is spent on buying pan. Whereas you do not chew pan at all, and tea you refuse."

"Safr hadhratan" - Habits in travel should be like those at home. The question of usuls (principles) is different. My Hadhrat used to say, "The usuls of safr are different, and the usuls of hadr (residence) are different. One cannot adopt the same principles in travel that one adopts at home." In safr there is caution and consideration, and one has to overlook many things.

"Ibnis sabil" - the musafir, the wayfarer. The other categories that have been dealt with are people we know. We now come to the wayfarer who is a complete stranger. He should also be shown due consideration. The status of a person at home may be such that he enjoys all round respect and honour. However, when he is travelling he is just as ordinary as anyone else. For example: the provincial administrator, in his office or at home, will be shown great respect, which his status demands. However, if he is travelling in his personal capacity, he will be treated like any other ordinary person by those who do not know him. If he tries to exert his authority in this situation, it will get him nowhere.

One can only exclaim one's wonder at the depth with which Allah Ta'ala has laid out our mu'asharat, "Wah! Allah mia. Wah!" Is there anything left out by Allah Ta'ala in the Qur'an shareef? Definitely

not! Every aspect of our life has been touched on, what makes up our social environment, our "mahol". The English word "society" has become popular. We often hear people justifying their behaviour by saying, "What can we do? Society is like that." The person blaming "society" is actually exposing his own weakness. He is confessing to his own cowardice. From the fear of "society" he is refraining from that which is polite, decent and good, and, as a Muslim, that which the shariat has commanded. His excuse is that the "mahol", the social environment, is to be blamed.

This person is testifying to his cowardice. By succumbing to the environment he has had the bravado knocked out of him. Just look at the dressing of a Muslim, even that of the unsophisticated peasant: thigh-hugging pants, a "kurtiya" till the hips (the kurta has disappeared), and a head not covered by a topi. The Muslim has himself removed his royal crown, the topi, from his head. Whereas the suit a Muslim should be wearing should consist of a topi, kurta and izar, and shoes. The Islamic mu'asharati lifestyle has been discarded and destroyed.

Ibnis sabil - the wayfarer. He is a stranger, not known to you. Yet, treat him with due consideration, whether he is a Muslim or non-Muslim. Observe his rights. Do not sit in the bus or train in such a way as to inconvenience him. If a woman climbs on, and there is no vacant seat for her, your response should be, "Bhen, please sit here. I have been sitting long enough." This is the Islamic code of manners.

We had a safir here, a roving ambassador, a very good man who has now passed away. He related an experience of his to us. "Once I was travelling by train. The coach was full. At different stops some men climbed on, others climbed off. At one stop a non-Muslim woman climbed on. There was no vacant seat for her. I stood up and called to her to sit on the seat I had vacated, which she did. A non-Muslim man seated nearby, commented, "Molvijee, you have won. I was watching you and noted your friendly attitude to your fellow religionists. When this lady entered, one of my co-religionists, I wondered what your attitude would be. But you have won - you stood up and offered her your seat. Today I have seen what Islamic manners really are!"

These are manners which we have discarded!

During the period that Islam spread far and wide, did Islam spread by the sword? No, never! This is a malicious lie levelled at Muslims. Islam spread through the good character and behaviour of the Muslims.

You will remember that the use of the sword was specifically forbidden in the early period of Islam, during the first 13 years in Makkah. Yet, Islam spread. So, what was it? Good character! Even afterwards, when the use of the sword was allowed, it was not used at random. And later still, when Muslims had gained victory over other countries, it was not the sword that was held over the heads of the defeated. After gaining victory the country was at times handed to its inhabitants to rule, but under certain conditions: they were told to pay jizya, to avoid oppression, not to cause hardship to Muslims, not to trouble the Muslim traveller, not to prevent anyone from entering the fold of Islam, etc. But you rule. Our objective is not to take over the rule.

Look at the attitude to the zimmi (those non-Muslims who were brought back as captives): They were to be dealt with on an equal footing with Muslims. For example: if a zimmi was wrongfully killed by a Muslim, that Muslim was answerable for his murder.

23.ANIMALS

Let us proceed further. So far we have dealt with the rights of different categories of humans. What about the rights of animals? Islam teaches that the domestic animal in your possession is your responsibility. You have to see to its food and drink, to its shelter, to its protection from the heat of summer and the cold of winter, all to be done in the correct manner.

Should you wish to slaughter an animal, it is incumbent on you to use a very sharp knife. Should you use a blunt knife, you will have committed a sin, for which you will be called to account. So that, on the day of Qiyamat, that animal will ask to be compensated for the unnecessary suffering inflicted on it. The rights of the animal will then be requited. The owner of the animal will not be in a position to deny his guilt. Allah Ta'ala will then order him, "Lie down!" The animal will then be told, "Go ahead and take your revenge."

When an animal dies, that is the end of it.. There is no Jannat and no Jahannam for an animal, it will be turned into dust. Nevertheless, the rights of every animal will be requited.

These are the rights that the creation enjoys, which are rights demanded by Allah Ta'ala. By observing the rights of the creation, one is in fact observing the rights of Allah Ta'ala (Huququllah).

Take this illustration: A person does not hurl abuse at the child's father, but the child is abused. Will the father of that child not take offence? Of course he will. If you understand the above, then you will understand the following as well:

The kafir is accountable to Allah Ta'ala for his kufr, but as for you, you are accountable for your behaviour towards him as far as his mu'asharati rights are concerned.

Hadhrat Abubakr Siddiq (RA)'s mother-in-law came from Makkah to visit her daughter in Madina. Hadhrat Abubakr (RA)'s wife was worried. She went to Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) and enquired: "My mother has come. She has not brought iman as yet. She is a kafirah. What should I do?"

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) replied, "She is your mother. Treat her well. Be hospitable and charitable towards her.

The same would apply if the father was a kafir and the children were Muslim. If this is the right of a kafir parent, how much more respectfully must a Mu'min parent not be treated? Because of his iman his status is obviously higher.

Do you understand?

Today the concept of a mu'asharati lifestyle has been placed before you, with the necessary proofs. This is necessary for the furtherance of your is'ah, for the improvement of your habits, actions and deeds, and your total lifestyle.

Different approaches have been adopted, so that you may become aware of your shortcomings. You have been shown how to behave towards those staying with you, your parents, your brothers and

sisters, and children, your relatives, in-laws, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces, your neighbours, etc. The appropriate proofs have been laid before you so that you may act on what you have heard.

Youngsters present here will have had their ears opened and made aware of their disrespect for their parents, and the grief they cause them by going around with any type of company, going out when they feel like it, and coming home at their own time.

Our age was different. One could not leave the house without the permission of one's parents. The mere thought of coming home late would send shivers of fear down our spines.

Nowadays youngsters come and go as they like. There is no concern about the hour - early or late, it makes no difference. They go where they want to and sit around with whom they want to. This could not be done in the past. The habits of the past are the very teachings of Islam which have been handed down to us from 1400 years ago.

The ayet on mu'asharat came to mind today because of the way people came running in this morning. In the rush there is bound to be bumping and falling, knocking of knees and elbows, and striking of feet. In sitting down there is bound to be thumping and pushing. Is that not so?

So, this ayet came to mind, instructing on mu'asharat. It is an all-encompassing ayet, extending to the consideration to be given to the musafir even. If the traveller is to be given consideration, what about the person sitting next to you? And the neighbours at a distance, the neighbours close by, the orphans and the poor, one's relatives, and parents? If each category has priority over the previous one, one can imagine the rights parents enjoy.

24. IBADAT AND ABDIYET

Today's lesson, today's majlis has been on mu'asharat. It should be obvious to you now that mu'asharat is also ibadat.

One type of ibadat is obviously ibadat - namaz, etc. There is another ibadat which is indirectly so. In appearance it does not seem to be ibadat.

If this second category does not have the appearance of ibadat, how can we say it is ibadat? The answer is: When Allah Ta'ala's orders are carried out as they should be, one receives thawab. Whatever carries with it thawab falls in the category of ibadat.

It is on this basis that Islamic mu'asharat is ibadat. So, do not think that five times namaz at its proper times, with jama'at and takbire-via, performed with all the proper arkans, or tilawat of the Qur'an shareef with proper tajwid, or sitting with tasbih and making zikr, are the only forms of ibadat.

It is important to attain perfection in all categories of the Deen, and not only in those categories which are obviously ibadat.

That, person leaving out this important section of the Deen cannot be called an abed. He is not deserving of the title of "abed" (pious worshipper).

He has not developed abdiyetyet in himself yet. We find that when he sees a poor person he turns his face away. Where will he condescend to concern himself about the conditions of the poor? We also

find that when travelling, he is only concerned about his own Comfort, irrespective of the inconvenience caused others. Etc.

From this ayet of the Qur'an shareef we have come to realise, through our shortcomings, what a major ibadat we have left out. Yet we are happy within ourselves that we are performing tahajjud and making tilawat, that our beards conform to the requirements of the shariat, that our trousers' legs are now above the ankle, and that the length of our kurta now extends lower than before. Yes, we feel very happy in our hearts about these.

Yet, we have discarded many sections of the Deen, one of which is mu'asharat. For this we will be accountable to Allah Ta'ala.

Yes, Allah Ta'ala will ask, "Why did you speak in such a way as to hurt the next person's feelings, as to offend him?"

Here please note: If the next person is offended by some aspect of the shariat, then this is not called hurting his feelings. Also, if there is offence to the Deen by following somebody's opinion, then one cannot accept his opinion, no matter how offended he feels. His opinion has to be ignored.

In other words, to offend a person is nothing compared to offending the Deen.

Nowadays a completely wrong meaning is attached to the expression "offending somebody". We find, at times, Westernised persons telling the molvis, "What is the matter? You are not prepared to accept anything we say. We feel very offended, and it is not a nice thing to offend others."

When confronted in this way, there is no question of being overwhelmed. "We are there to serve. Our lives are there to please, to cheer, to bring ease and comfort, to be magnanimous. But we have no choice. What can we do? To accept your views would be to offend our Deen. At this point the Deen says something else. And you also admit that this is Deen. Most probably you were not aware what the Deen had to say on the issue, that is why you voiced a different opinion. We are certain that, when you realise your error, you will retract your viewpoint."

When the position has been explained thus, the following response would be forthcoming: "Maulana, please forgive me, maf. I was not aware of the deeper aspects involved. Insha'allah ta'ala I will bear it in mind in future."

This is an illustration of the etiquette of speaking. Talk to a person at his level.

Islam has certain maxims. This is one of them: "Talk to a person at his level of intelligence. "

"Respond to a person according to his status. "

This is another maxim. It is not within the capabilities of everybody to apply these maxims in the varying situations, bearing in mind the subtleties involved.

This reminds me of an incident:

Hadhratwala used to hold his majlise-am after Zuhr. (The majlise-khas and akhas were held only if there were special visitors). Anybody could come to sit in a majlise-am. Those who so wished, could

go forward to make musafah (shake hands), but few could muster up enough courage to actually go forward to do so.

It was during one such majlise-am that a Hindu orderly entered the majlis khana and approached Hadhratwala.

"Huzur", he said, after being asked his errand, "the Tehsildar saheb has come in his horse-drawn coach. He wishes to meet you."

It was still the period of the British Raj. Horses were still commonly used for travel. Partition took place some years after the demise of Hadhratwala.

The orderly continued, "I am his orderly, and he has sent me to seek permission for him to meet you. His coach is at the entrance."

Here people come in and go out any old how! There was nothing stopping the tehsildar from having come in to converse with Hadhratwala. But that would have been out of place. Unannounced and without introduction, it could have led to embarrassing situations. Being a high ranking official the correct protocol was to send the orderly to seek permission first.

Hadhratwala gave his permission and the orderly departed to inform the tehsildar.

We were sitting and watching. Hadhratwala told us, "When the tehsildar enters, I will stand up, but do not any of you stand up." The tehsildar was a non-Muslim.

The tehsildar entered. Next to Hadhratwala was a space for visitors. Placed there was a quilt and a cushion. A small table stood nearby as well, having some kitabs and a few other items on it. We remained seated. Hadhratwala placed his hands on the ground for support, and started getting up. The tehsildar quickly went forward and stopped Hadhratwala. "Huzur, do not trouble yourself."

Hadhratwala sat down again. The tehsildar was seated on one side and made comfortable.

Hadhratwala then explained, "All the people sitting here are quite aware of the etiquette of receiving a guest. However, I was the one who had instructed them to remain sitting."

Hadhratwala was answering an unasked question. The thought must have come into the tehsildar's mind when he entered and saw Hadhratwala starting to rise, "Why is it that everybody else is sitting while Hadhrat is standing up?"

Hadhratwala had an uncanny ability to anticipate doubts arising in others' minds.

Hadhratwala explained further, "Persons like yourself, in positions of responsibility, have a composed mind. If so many people were to stand up suddenly, all at once, it must cause some disturbance, which would be inconsiderate on our side. It was to preserve your inner tranquility that I had ordered them not to rise."

Do you understand?

Huquq, Rights of the guest, who was a non-Muslim, but a ruler in his own right.

Respond to a person according to his status

We were taught everything. Pray we have the tawfiq to act accordingly.

To act fully and completely on the ayet of the Qur'an and Hadith shareef, on every occasion, taking cognisance of place and person, should be our aim.

A point to remember with regard to the incident just related: Hadhratwala rising for the tehsildar was not ta'ziman, nor mohabbatan - it was neither out of reverence nor out of love - this would be na-ja'ez.

It was "ikraman-bizzayf" - respect for a guest. It was a portrayal of Islamic manners. It would also fall in the category of "dafa' mudharrat" - preventing harm. The intention is not "jalbe manfa'at" (to derive benefit), which would be na-ja'ez.

This I mention in case somebody were to ask, "How could Hadhratwala stand up for a non-Muslim?"

Today the muasharati lifestyle has been placed before you.

May Allah Ta'ala give us, and all of you, the tawfiq arzani to act according to this mu'asharat, in our homes and outside, with our own and with strangers.